

University of Dundee

The Big Sheep

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THE BIG SHEEP

A PHILIP MERLOT THRILLER



HAILEY AUSTIN

CATRIONA LAIRD

THE BIG SHEEP



Dundee, Scotland. I'd been teaching the film noir course for a few weeks, searching for the unfindable: a comic that referenced the critical films on the course. My feet dragged me from the closet I called an office and I headed south towards the Tay. I found myself sitting in the Dundee Comics Creative Space, surrounded by comics artists, academics and enthusiasts. Inspiration struck. I didn't know if it was the Dr. Pepper talking or if it was Raymond Chandler himself who spoke to me. I realised, the best way to prove film noir is a style rather than a genre is to make a comic that combines all of these elements and throws them in your face.

In this, the last week of the film noir module, I give you *The Big Sheep*. It's chock-full of noir and comics references, interspersed with some bad puns and an anthropomorphic twist. Hopefully, this isn't goodbye, because according to Chandler, "To say goodbye is to die a little." But what most people don't remember is that after that he said, "unless you study comics in which case you'll live forever, probably."

Hailey Austin

Comics PhD Student, Film Noir Tutor, and Part-Time Detective

I'd like to give my sincere thanks to everyone involved in this project. It would not have been possible without Chris Murray's guidance, enthusiasm and interest. And I cannot thank the talented artists, Catriona Laird, Helen Robinson, and Rebecca Horner, enough for making this comic better than I could have ever imagined it.

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Front Cover & Det. Hailey Icon: Catriona Laird Back Cover: Helen Robinson
Edited by Hailey Austin & Chris Murray



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WHERE'D YOU
STASH THE BIG
SHEEP, EH?



???



WHAT?! I DON'T HAVE IT!
I WAS PAID TO FOLLOW YOU
AND FIND IT!



THIS GUY'S
NO USE TO US.

GET RID OF HIM.

IT WAS SUPPOSED TO BE A SIMPLE JOB.



SOME BIRD HAD PAID ME RIDICULOUS CREDITS TO TRAIL A **MR C. GULLIVER**. THOUGHT HE'D NABBED HER FANCY STATUE.



I SHOULD'VE SMELLED TROUBLE...



...BUT MY NOSE NEVER WAS THAT GOOD.



I GOT DISTRACTED BY SOME DAME ON STAGE...

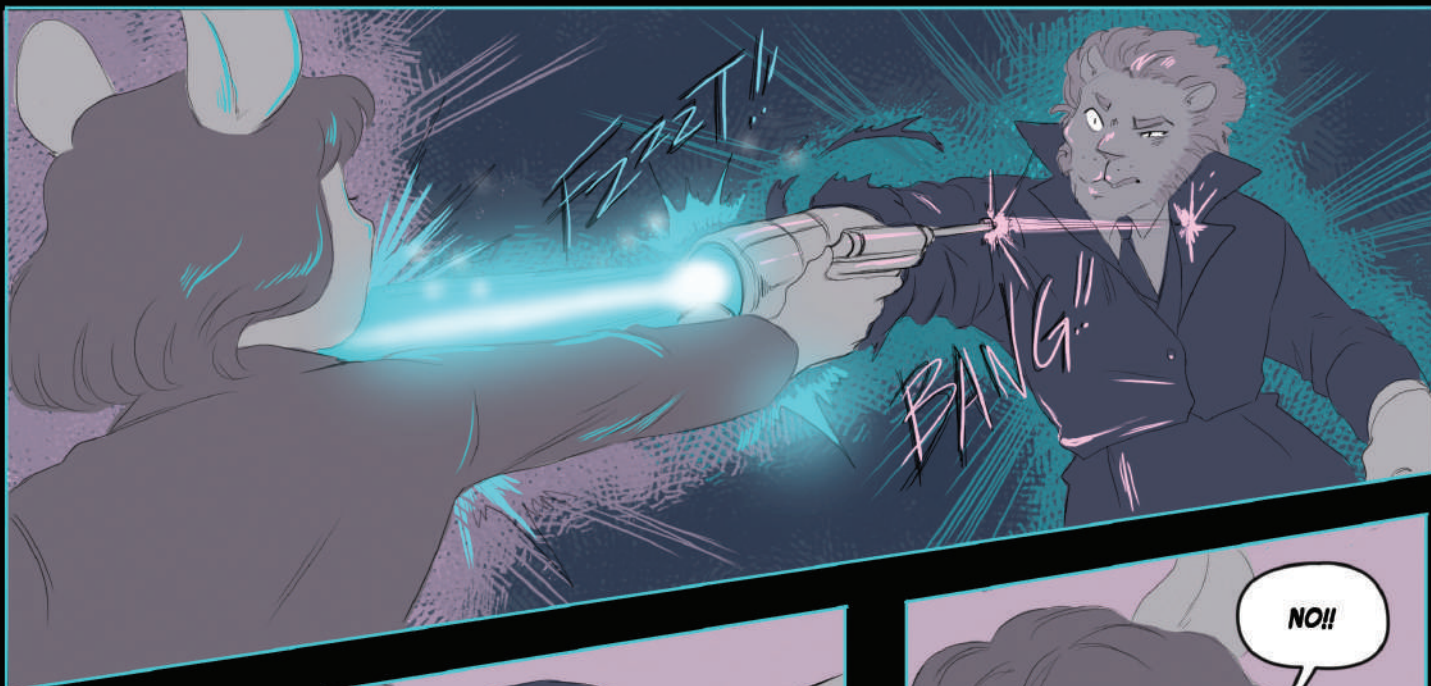


AND THE GOONS GOT THE DROP ON ME.



THEY DUMPED ME ON THE WRONG SIDE OF THE TRACKS, BUT LET ME LIVE.





I KNEW I HAD TO ACT FAST.



I HAD TO SEE WHAT ALL THE TROUBLE WAS FOR.



A DARK MATTER REPLICANT...



I THOUGHT THEY WERE A MYTH...

THE EXPLOSION GOT THE DAME AND THE BIG SHEEP, LEAVING ME AS THE ONLY SUSPECT.

I DON'T BELIEVE THIS STATEMENT ONE BIT!

HOW'D YOU LIKE A SWIFT PUNCH ON THE NOSE?

I *TREMBLE* AT THE THOUGHT.

OOOOOOH MERLOT, YOUR GOOSE IS *COOKED*.

TPD

CONFESION

NO TRAP IS AS DEADLY AS THE ONE YOU SET YOURSELF.

SCENE COMPARISONS

The Big Sheep adapts several scenes from the films in the noir module, like the ones below. But it also adapts and parodies several names and quotes from the films and novels. Can you sniff out the rest of the references?



The Maltese Falcon (1941)
Dir. John Huston



Kiss Me Deadly (1955)
Dir. Robert Aldrich



Double Indemnity (1944)
Dir. Billy Wilder



FILMOGRAPHY

Much like comics, film posters use a static image to tell a moving tale.
Below are six of the most famous film posters referenced in *The Big Sheep*.
But rest assured, there are more.



THE BIG SLEEP (1946)
DIR. HOWARD HAWKS



BLADE RUNNER (1982)
DIR. RIDLEY SCOTT



THE MALTESE FALCON (1941)
DIR. JOHN HUSTON



KISS ME DEADLY (1955)
DIR. ROBERT ALDRICH



M (1931)
DIR. FRITZ LANG



CHINATOWN (1974)
DIR. ROMAN POLANSKI

PROCESS

Much like a film, creating a comic is a process that involves collaboration and multiple drafts. The following pages give some insight into the comics creation process from film, to script, pencils, colours and the final version before you!

Page 2

PANEL ONE

Long shot with Merlot's inner monologue. Merlot is hiding behind a wall in his trench coat (possibly fedora) and on the right we can see the C. Gull and Rhino looking in a store window.

MERLOT SOME BIRD HAD PAID ME RIDICULOUS CREDITS TO TRAIL A MR C. GULLIVER. THOUGHT HE'D NABBED HER FANCY STATUE.

PANEL TWO

Close-up of C. gull framed by the knives in the window like in M. He can see the reflection of Merlot in the window and smiles to himself. He knows Merlot is following him.



I included this image from Fritz Lang's M (1931).

One of the first steps in making a comic is writing the script. Using a typewriter is optional.

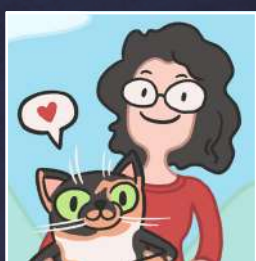


Catriona then sent her incredible thumbnail. Once that was approved, she sent over pencils with more details. There were two stages of colouring the pages with a few rounds of edits before the final page complete.



The back cover was inspired by a Big Sleep poster. I sent it to Helen, who then sent back her impressive thumbnails and final illustration.

CAST



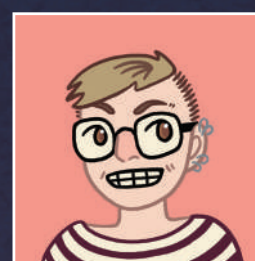
Hailey Austin is a comics PhD student who also loves film noir. When she's not fighting crime, she teaches film noir. *Icon* by Rebecca Horner



Catriona Laird is an illustrator and comic artist who loves big monsters. Catriona is also a freelance designer for V&A Dundee helping facilitate design workshops and tours.



Helen Robinson is a freelance comics artist and illustrator from Northern Ireland. She is most certainly not planning a heist with a top notch crew of rogues and ruffians. gofishblues.com



Rebecca Horner is a cartoonist, colourist and film noir enthusiast. She has done production on many books, including this one. rebeccahorner.com



Slinky!
Sultry!
Sensational!!!

NATASHA